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The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
KATHLEEN BLISS

14th November, 1945

DEAR MEMBER,

We try in the News-Letter to hold a balance between attempting to understand some of the great forces which are shaping human history, and calling attention to the significant acts of individuals and small groups.

ABBÉ COUTURIER

In January, 1942, we published a Supplement (No. 116) on the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity, which, founded by a small group of Anglicans in 1909, was given larger content by the Roman Catholic Abbé Couturier of Lyons. His boundless enthusiasm and unceasing efforts caused it to be observed by many communions, including the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox, and in many countries. It is now some years since direct news of the Abbé's work has reached us, and we were, therefore, particularly delighted to hear from him. The Abbé is a partial invalid and conditions under the occupation were not the most auspicious for carrying on his work. Nevertheless, he has sent us a large collection of his recent publications, all of them designed to promote understanding at a deep level between the separated communions. One, for example, is an admirably produced and illustrated magazine, describing for Roman Catholic readers the work of Protestant missions. It is packed with carefully gathered factual information and does much to clear up misunderstandings common among Catholics about the aims and purposes of Protestant missions. Another is devoted to "Missions and Unity." The style is popular and the illustrations superb. Other small pamphlets reproduce for French Catholic readers accounts of ecumenical statements, conferences and joint action between the Churches.

The Abbé writes :—

"I am deeply touched by your goodness in continuing to send me, now that the thick curtain between our two countries has been lifted, your remarkable Christian News-Letters. England has been a second country to me since my two memorable visits in 1937 and 1938. I shall send you all I can on the subject of the ecumenical work which the Lord clearly calls me to do in Catholicism.

"In France, the work of 'spiritual ecumenicism,' the universal prayer of Christians for Christian unity with its annual week of

remembrance, January 18–25, has gone on growing and passes like a flame from hand to hand. The essential truth is becoming more and more firmly established, that the re-union of Christendom will be the work of praying people even more than of theology, and that theology will make its necessary contribution only in so far as it is a 'praying theology,' *theologia sacra*, theology born of and nourished by prayer.

"The work of your periodical bears upon many urgent concerns. Christians in all countries are called by Christ to this immense task of building a new world. Every morning at the Holy Sacrifice I shall pray to the Lord for you and your fellow-workers, asking him to renew in you ever more abundantly the gift of his spirit, that you may accomplish ever better the task which he has entrusted to you. Your publication has already given much light, opened up many perspectives, rectified many judgments. I hope from time to time to republish some of your News-Letters in one of our big daily papers here in Lyons."

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

The work of the Church is forwarded not only by those who give to it years of unremitting work, but by those who in the midst of immense promise, when their life-work has hardly begun, are called upon to surrender their lives for Christ's Church. Such a one was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, who knew him well, has written of him in these terms :—

"The story of Bonhoeffer belongs to the modern Acts of the Apostles. He was killed by his Nazi captors only a few days before the collapse of the Nazi regime. Bonhoeffer was one of the leaders of the Confessional Synod. He was the head of the secret theological seminary conducted by the Synod after the Nazis had corrupted the theological education of the universities. Despite his youth, for he was in his thirties, he was one of the most influential religious oppositional leaders in Germany. He was certainly the most uncompromising and heroic.

"During the last two years Bonhoeffer was in and out of prison. He was in prison when the attempt was made on Hitler's life in July, 1944. He might have lost his own life at that time because he was an intimate adviser of some of the men who, inspired by religious motives, participated in the plot on Hitler's life, hoping thereby to bring the evil Nazi regime to an end. He was actually sentenced to be executed ; but his life was spared when the judge who sentenced him lost his life in a bomb raid upon Berlin before he had signed Bonhoeffer's death sentence. It now appears, however, that the Nazis killed him and his brother Klaus, together with some known anti-Nazi leaders shortly before the Americans advanced upon his prison.

" Bonhoeffer was a brilliant young theologian who combined a deep piety with a high degree of intellectual sophistication. He was strongly under the influence of Barth's theology. When he was in America in 1930–31 as a German fellow at Union Theological Seminary, he was inclined to regard political questions as completely irrelevant to the life of faith. But as the Nazi evil rose he became more and more its uncompromising foe.

" In July of 1939 Bonhoeffer made one of his periodic visits to Britain. At that time he told me that Hitler would attack Poland before the end of summer ; that the executive committee of the Synod had agreed with him that he ought to leave Germany rather than be destroyed, since he was unalterably opposed to Hitler's war. It was felt that his life might well be saved for the work of the Church after the war.

" Quick communication to America procured for him the desired official invitations which were necessary to get him out of Germany. Dr. Coffin of Union Seminary arranged for various invitations, including one to teach in the summer school at the seminary.

" The war had already begun when I next heard from him. He wrote somewhat to this effect : ' Sitting here in Dr. Coffin's garden I have had the time to think and to pray about my situation and that of my nation and to have God's will for me clarified. I have come to the conclusion that I have made a mistake in coming to America. I must live through this difficult period of our national history with the Christian people of my country. I will have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people. My brothers in the Confessional Synod wanted me to go. They may have been right in urging me to do so : but I was wrong in going. Such a decision each man must make for himself. Christians in Germany will face the terrible alternative of either willing the defeat of their nation in order that Christian civilization may survive, or willing the victory of their nation and thereby destroying our civilization. I know which of these alternatives I must choose ; but I cannot make that choice in security.'

" Bonhoeffer had remarkably clear religious insights and the purity of a completely dedicated soul. Considering how recently he had developed his political and social interests, his shrewdness in assessing political and military tendencies was also remarkable. When Hitler invaded Russia and his armies stood deep in Russian territory, Bonhoeffer assured Dr. Visser 't Hooft, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, that the Russian invasion spelt Hitler's doom. In 1942 he met his friend, the Bishop of Chichester, in Stockholm and gave him in advance information on the *coup d'état* involving an attempt on Hitler's life, which finally took place in July, 1944. He wanted the Bishop to let British and American

authorities know that if certain people, whom he mentioned, were involved in the plot, they could regard it as a *bona fide* anti-Nazi venture. Unfortunately, the little group which prepared this plot were in some respects too unskilled in the dangerous work they undertook. Yet they came, according to reliable information, rather more closely to success than is usually assumed. But what the group lacked in skill it compensated for in devotion. Another young Christian layman associated with Bonhoeffer, Adam von Trott, was among the nineteen who were executed.

" In an ecumenical group meeting in Geneva in 1941 Bonhoeffer made a remark which symbolizes the purity and the profundity of his faith. Asked for the content of his thought in a period of meditation, he declared : ' I am praying for the defeat of my nation. Only in and through defeat can it expiate the grievous wrong which it has done Europe and the world.' "

THE SUPPLEMENT

A few weeks ago the medical faculty of the University of Heidelberg was reopened, as a first instalment in the re-establishment of university life in Germany. We are very glad to be able to publish the speech made on this occasion by the newly-elected Rector of the University, Professor Karl Jaspers. What he had to say has an importance far beyond the occasion.

Professor Karl Jaspers came to philosophy through a study of psychology. His over-mastering interest, evident in his books, was in man's craving for a philosophy of life which would enable him to act meaningfully in the stream of events. He became professor of philosophy in Heidelberg, where all who came in contact with him spoke of the profound impression made by a noble personality. He was dismissed from his post by the Nazis shortly after they came into power.

Yours sincerely,

Kathleen Bliss

P.S. Many News-Letter readers have in past years sent subscriptions as Christmas gifts to friends. Details and forms for this year will appear in our next issue.

We are now able to send the News-Letter to most countries on the Continent. We are already sending it to subscribers there who were cut off by the events of 1940. Nobody on the Continent is, however, at present allowed to send money to this country. If any News-Letter readers would care to take out a subscription for a friend on the Continent, or send us a subscription to be used at our discretion, we know that it would be greatly appreciated.

THE RENEWAL OF THE UNIVERSITY

An address by PROFESSOR KARL JASPERS *at the Inauguration of the Medical Courses at the University of Heidelberg, August 15th,* 1945.

For the first time for twelve years we have freely elected a Rector and have one of our own choosing. To-day medical classes begin. It is a great day for our university. We may hope that other faculties will soon follow and that at a not too distant date the university will be open as a whole.

It is a new beginning after the pause which followed the collapse of Germany and after the ruin in which for twelve years the university has been involved.

It is true that the core of the university has continued to exist beneath the surface. There were professors and students who remained inwardly free, objectively fulfilling their vocation. Something was kept alive in spite of the collective dismissals, in spite of the interference with teaching and research, in spite of the destruction of our ancient constitution and self-government in the interests of an educational policy and practice tainted in its fundamental assumptions, perverted to political ends and steadily deteriorating in value. Because it was not possible wholly to destroy the scientific spirit the university is able to-day to make a new beginning, even though it is only within circumscribed limits.

That we are again able to work we owe to the consent of the occupying Power. After unconditional surrender, after the silent disappearance of the leaders of the regime, after the cessation of any form of existence as a State, we have no rights to which we can lay claim. We live in the condition of *Vae victis*. In this situation, however, we have not fallen into the hands of barbarian peoples, but of peoples who recognize as the foundation of their life the rights of man which in their history they once solemnly proclaimed. That we can count on the toleration, and it may be the help, of the victors for the rebuilding of our university is due alone to their active faith in these rights of man which they are ready to assure even to us who have been conquered. They have declared that the German people must not be destroyed, and that the German people must be educated. Of these rights, as given to us by them, it is our responsibility to avail ourselves. Here is something that we can trust, if anywhere in the world there is still a place in which we can repose our confidence.

THE RAVAGES OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM

Our fresh start cannot, however, simply take the form of a return to the conditions which existed before 1933. Too much has happened. The catastrophe has gone too deep. We ourselves have become different from what we were in 1933. It was possible in the collapse of all values

to seek for death—in 1933, for example, when after the breach of the constitution through a legal quibble the dictatorship was established and all opposition was swept away in the delirium of a large part of our people. We could have sought for death when the lawlessness of the regime showed itself openly on 30th June, 1934, or in the robbery, deportation and murder of our Jewish friends and fellow citizens and, when in 1938 throughout the whole of Germany the synagogues—the houses of God—were to our indelible shame and guilt burnt to the ground. We could have sought death in the war when the Government from its very beginning acted in violation of the thesis of our greatest philosopher Kant, who laid it down as a basic stipulation of international law that no acts must be committed in war which would make a later reconciliation between those who waged war absolutely impossible. Thousands in Germany have sought, or at least have found, death in opposition to the Government, most of them anonymously. We who survive have not sought death. When our Jewish friends were taken away, we did not go out into the street and cry aloud until we also met our death. We preferred to remain in life for the weak, even if justifiable, reason that our death would not in any way have helped. It is our own fault that we are still alive. We know before God what it is that deeply humiliates us. Something has happened to us during these twelve years, which is as it were a recasting of our whole nature. In mythological language, the devils have assailed us and swept us into a confusion so that we are no longer able to see and hear. We have had glimpses into the reality of the world, and of man, and of ourselves which we cannot forget. What the effect will be upon our thinking is unforeseeable.

That we still survive appears a miracle. But beyond this is the fact that our survival is our own decision. It demands that we should take upon ourselves the consequences of being alive under such conditions. The only value that remains to us in the collapse of values is sincerity, and springing from that, endlessly patient work in spite of hindrances and failures. So long as the opportunity is granted to us we have to *earn* the life that has been preserved to us.

We must dissociate ourselves from a past that persists around us and in us. We do not seek retribution, though we are bound to acknowledge that it is inevitable. The chain of evil must some day be broken. We want to live, not by the rejection of the bad, but by assent to the good out of the depths of our own true past which sustains us. We are loyal to our fathers, to our domicile and to our fatherland, which we recognize in Kant, Goethe, Lessing and other outstanding figures, in all in our history that possessed nobility through conformity to the eternal demands of the moral law, in our German speech, in our woods, mountains and streams and in our sea.

THE RENEWAL OF THE UNIVERSITY

In such a situation, then, by becoming such men we must set to work again to rebuild our university. So far as externals are concerned, we have the hope that our old constitution and self-government will be again restored to us, that we shall have the material provision of

clinics, institutes and seminars, that our students will be able to live, that the conditions of research and teaching will be re-established in however modest a form. But all that is not yet renewal.

This renewal can in fact come to us only through the labour of individual scholars and students in the fellowship of their spiritual life. This fellowship must take as its guide the imperishable idea of the university—the idea of a school of higher learning which serves simultaneously and in combination both research and teaching, claims freedom of teaching and learning as the condition of the responsible independence of professors and students, rejects mere instruction and self-enclosed specialization, and brings to full development the unity of the sciences in living communication and intellectual conflict.

The result of such a renewal will show itself in the spirit of a house, whether it be seminar, institute or clinic, in the way in which the work is done and scientific discussions are carried on. It will show itself in the publications and text-books, the tone of which will manifest such a spirit on every page. This renewal depends wholly on ourselves.

There is, however, as yet no public common outlook which unites us. We have not yet the ground on which we can stand in our conversation with one another. The idea of the university is not yet again a real living force. Multifarious fragments of questionable usages govern our thinking and valuations.

We Germans once had the strength to be able to stand on our own feet as individuals and in all situations of actual dependence to remain inwardly free and incorruptible. That is also to-day, especially intellectually, our only chance. Each of us in the university must make this venture on his own account, while he constantly listens and seeks communication with others, so that the idea of the university may again come to life.

The renewal of the university, then, depends on these pre-suppositions—the political and economic powerlessness of our land; the situation of *Vae victis*; the revolution in our nature brought about by twelve years of distress and shame; the responsibility resting on us, the still dispersed survivors, who have to set to work on the ruins; the opportunity of intellectual creation; the claim of the idea of the university.

All that will be the subject of fuller discussion when the arts faculties are again brought into operation.

THE PERVERSION OF MEDICINE

Medicine may seem to be somewhat more remote from these questions. It is thought of as a science and art, which in complete independence of politics has everywhere the same object wherever men are concerned about the health of their bodies and their minds. That is, however, only appearance. We have seen the extent to which interference has been possible even in such a non-political field.

Doctors out of a very inadequate knowledge of the processes of heredity contributed material for legislation, the execution of which

they ought to have accompanied by a widely published professional opinion or to have guarded against inhumane consequences.

Doctors were compelled to undertake operations (sterilization) which they could not in the majority of cases justify with a good conscience. Some doctors lent themselves to putting to death the mentally diseased.

We have experienced something which resembles the illusion about witches of the later middle ages—the illusion of race, accompanied by all the errors resulting from a so-called biological *Weltanschauung*. These notions exhibit the same features as those of the earlier period —a closed mind, the translation of all reasons to the contrary into confirmations, the replacement of solid justification by sophistry, terror and torture, an anxious concern on the part of well-meaning persons whether there might not be after all something in it, the sadistic satisfaction of others who insatiably demanded still more barbarous measures.

All that was the product of national-socialism. But obviously it could come about only because these possibilities were already present. Somewhere in our antecedent tradition there lay hidden what here found such disastrous expression. We have to seek out the germs of the evil which had established themselves unsuspected long before. That is one of the great tasks of a profound historical self-reflection.

Here we can give only one example taken from the field of medicine. An exceptionally stimulating psychiatrist, highly esteemed in his time, was the joint author with a jurist of a brochure on the extermination of life that did not deserve to survive. The view was in accordance with the way of thinking of a godless, positivist world. It was here that the ideas were propounded that have now had as their practical consequence the putting to death of the mentally diseased, which was certainly not intended in the beginning. But what is of decisive importance is that the demand should have been made at all that on the manifestation of certain symptoms the mentally diseased should be put to death, that this demand should have had nothing to do with science or with any assured result of science, that the motives of humanity should have become obscured, and that such a demand on the strength of apparently illuminating instances should have seemed plausible in the eyes of men who by modern standards were intelligent. The matter is not in fact a simple one. Every doctor knows how, for example, when patients suffering from cancer are in acute pain the injection can be beneficially increased, so that the patient no longer regains consciousness, and the transition to the fatal dose is a gradual one.

THE TWO FOUNDATION PILLARS OF MEDICINE

From this one lesson may be learned—that there are questions which are insoluble. When they are brought into the sphere of calculation and fundamental principle one finds oneself confronted with something that one must reverently accept. Such unanswerable questions are common, e.g. in questions relating to the freedom of the will or to legislation in regard to accidents, or even in questions of ordinary therapy. Even in these unanswerable questions, however,

the way can be clear. This clarity will always be attainable where the two foundation pillars on which medicine rests can be relied upon.

These two pillars are the love of truth and respect for human nature, or *science* and *humanity*. If those two pillars had remained firm the interference of national-socialism in medicine would have been impossible.

THE SPIRIT OF SCIENCE

First, the *scientific spirit*, which means knowing what one does know and what one does not know. Dogmatic knowledge is unscientific. To be scientific means to know for good reasons; merely to accept ready-made opinions is unscientific. Knowledge accompanied by a consciousness of the limits of knowledge, as these are determined from time to time, is scientific; all total knowledge which assumes that one can have knowledge of the whole is unscientific. Unceasing criticism and self-criticism, the impulse to call everything in question, is scientific; anxiety that doubt may be crippling is unscientific. The methodical procedure which arrives at a decision, step by step and on the basis of experience is scientific; to play with multifarious opinions and possibilities is unscientific.

I venture to maintain that an unscientific trend runs through the greater part of our scientific and medical literature. It was this unscientific temper that opened the doors to national-socialism, since the latter found an attitude that was ready to meet it half way. We may take one example.

The *theory of race* fastens on something which doubtless plays an important role in the sub-structure of human nature. But the conception of race is itself not clear. What was taught about the theory of race as a school subject all through these years is for the greater part a swindle. But the consequences were, first, a disastrous pseudo-scientific myth which distorted the conception of human nature; and, secondly, the murderous acts which attempted to get rid of races that were declared to be inferior.

The *doctrine of heredity* belongs to the most imposing developments of research in the field of the natural sciences in recent decades. The study of the important works of the geneticists gives us an astonishing view of what our knowledge can achieve. Man is, however, for the most diverse reasons a specially unsuitable object, biologically speaking, for research regarding heredity. All that one can do is to apply to him knowledge of the processes of heredity acquired elsewhere. Such applications have indeed had some results in favourable instances in some forms of disease, although the exactitude of the geneticists has almost never been attained. In the widest circles, on the other hand, and in particular in the psychiatric theory of heredity, there has been encouraged a tendency to indulge in mathematical trifling and in typically unproductive research which dissipates itself in endless bypaths. The results are so meagre, that their practical application, even if one were to adopt the inhuman assumption underlying such application, would be in most cases scientifically conscienceless.

THE SPIRIT OF HUMANITY

The other pillar besides the spirit of science is the spirit of *humanity*. By this is meant respect for human nature. Each individual man is an infinity. No scientific conception can embrace him as a whole. Man is always more than what is known about him. The physician, therefore, and still more the psychiatrist and psycho-therapist, must never lose the consciousness of the inexhaustible mystery of each individual. He must not forget it even in what are apparently ordinary cases.

This inexhaustibility is the veil which screens the hidden and the real man from being completely apprehended by science. The freedom of a man is his fundamental reality, while for scientific knowledge based on experience there is no freedom.

Hence there belongs to humanity a *picture of man* that, over and above what is knowable, envisages what man is and may become. To the formation of this picture all the faculties of a university have to make their contribution. This picture in its full range provides for everyone, and above all for the physician, the setting which gives meaning to all special knowledge and skill. The picture of man has been in a very wide degree lost and especially in large parts of medical literature has become submerged. There is no true picture of man apart from God. Our task is to recover the true picture of man.

The scientific spirit and the spirit of humanity are complementary. The doctor who is also a humanist will not expect from science more than it is able to give, while at the same time he will want its contribution to be as complete and conscientious as possible.

The physician who is a true scientist knows that science alone is not a sufficient equipment for practice. At the boundary of what is scientifically possible he is the friend and helper of the patient and the companion of his destiny in the fellowship of a common humanity.

The spirits of science and humanity are inseparably bound up together. Where science is neglected, phantasy and deception become a substitute for faith, by which their dupes are no longer bound to God, but to their own fanaticisms. Absence of the scientific spirit is the soil in which inhumanity grows.

THE WHOLENESS OF THE UNIVERSITY

In order that the two pillars of the scientific spirit and humanity may be restored, there must be a *whole university*. Medicine, like all knowledge and skill, must live in the larger setting of the one all-comprehending truth represented in the cosmos of the sciences and in the living communication of scholars with one another. The whole university must be alive, if teaching and research are to flourish in the individual disciplines. We must not allow ourselves to be broken up into fragments.

Billroth, the world-famous surgeon, wrote in the seventies of last century that theology did not properly belong to the university. A medical student would not attend theological lectures, and a theological student who attended a medical lecture would be in danger of losing

his faith. But reverence for tradition kept Billroth from supporting the expulsion of the theological faculty from the university. His heart, educated in the humanities, would not be silenced in the face of such disastrous proposals for separation as were at that time regarded almost as a matter of course and have continued to exert an influence up to the present day. Apart from God and the soul there is nothing to prevent us from putting to death the mentally diseased.

In its origin the university was in fact a single whole. To meet the fundamental needs of our human nature three faculties were established—the theological faculty for the salvation of the soul, the faculty of law for the ordering of earthly community, the medical faculty for the health of the body. These three higher faculties were supported by a lower, the philosophical faculty, comprehending in itself the whole cosmos of the sciences—the fundamental sciences on which all practice is based.

It was a disaster that in the second half of the nineteenth century this unity was lost, first in the cultural consciousness and then in the external arrangements of the university. The consequences were, on the one hand, the dispersal of the sciences, the accompanying decay of the scientific spirit, because each individual science wanted to make itself the whole, and finally, the disintegration which culminated in the delusions of the national-socialist period ; and, on the other hand, the inability to absorb into the context of the whole the new, actual forces of the age, especially the technical, and to permeate them with its spirit.

The renewal deriving from its origin must be extended by the university to all the great human concerns of our time and the lost unity must be regained. This would restore what has been neglected for nearly a century. The task of such a renewal is concerned with the true meaning of our vocation. Perhaps the establishment of a technical faculty alongside of those of theology, law and medicine and the restoration of the ancient unity of the philosophical faculty are the chief problems of external university reform. They can find a right solution only if the totality of our world is alive in each individual scholar.

If that were to come about the special vocations would again march together in a single common spirit. The theological faculty would again really be the supreme faculty. While cultivating their own special fields, all would live in awareness of the whole, and would constantly keep its symbols in view. The physician, participating in all, would again become a doctor in the noble sense of Hippocrates, who said that the physician who is at the same time a philosopher resembles the gods.

Such a renewal of the university with its expanding outlook would embrace the whole man. One consequence would be that a healthy attitude to the State could fill a growing place in the general consciousness. A genuinely human State achieves along with power a simultaneous self-limitation of power, because it aims at realizing justice. Its meaning is rooted in the ordinary thinking of its citizens—in their solidarity. It undertakes, like all spiritual life, continuous self-correc-

tion. Its freedom manifests itself in the debate and conflict within the forms of law of minds which remain united, even in the most radical opposition, by an acknowledged common responsibility. It equips itself with all knowledge, and thus finds in the spiritual creativity of the university not only its own clearest consciousness, but the source of the education of its citizens. That can take place, however, only when the university is a comprehensive whole, and not merely an aggregate of professional schools and specialisms. The idea of the university and a dictatorship are mutually exclusive, as national-socialism has shown. The idea of the university contributes to the growth of a State founded upon law and maintained by free men.

FACING THE FUTURE

These are high aims. If we are to think in our situation of the renewal of the university, we must keep them clearly in view. For the spirit of man is open, even under material limitations, to the highest. But the way to the goal is long. For the present we can take no more than the very first steps.

We shall not talk jubilantly about a new era, nor fall a prey at any time to the false feeling that everything will go splendidly and that we shall become ideal men living in ideal conditions. Many were the victims of such illusions in 1918 and 1933. This self-intoxication is forbidden us at a time when ruin pursues its course. All that remains to us is to take our fate squarely on our own shoulders and to do what is still possible—hard work for a long stretch ahead, with little hope of immediate happiness, but with the blessing of the service of an ideal and—for the young especially—with the exhilarating experience of spiritual progress, of free and independent growth in mastering the sciences, and of the enlargement of the soul in depth and range.

May there be vouchsafed to us confidence and courage in following this path in the face of the terrible reality.

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